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# **Theatre Arts Standards of Learning**

**for  
Virginia  
Public Schools**



**Board of Education  
Commonwealth of Virginia**

**May 2000**

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# Theatre Arts Standards of Learning

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Virginia  
Public Schools

**Adopted in May 2000 by the  
Board of Education**

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# Foreword

The Standards of Learning in this publication represent a major development in public education in Virginia. These standards were adopted in May 2000 by the Virginia Board of Education to emphasize the importance of instruction in the fine arts—music, dance arts, theatre arts, and visual arts.

The Music, Dance Arts, Theatre Arts, and Visual Arts Standards of Learning are an important part of Virginia's efforts to provide challenging educational programs in the public schools. Knowledge and skills that students acquire through fine arts instruction include the ability to think critically, solve problems creatively, make informed judgments, work cooperatively within groups, appreciate different cultures, imagine, and create.

Copies of the Standards of Learning were distributed to public schools throughout Virginia for teachers to use in developing curricula and lesson plans to support the standards. The standards are minimum requirements in the fine arts that set reasonable targets and expectations for what teachers need to teach and students need to learn. The standards set clear, concise, measurable, and rigorous expectations for young people. Schools are encouraged to go beyond the prescribed standards to enrich the curriculum to meet the needs of all students.

The Standards of Learning for the fine arts were developed through the efforts of classroom teachers, curriculum specialists, administrators, college faculty, professional artists, fine arts organization representatives, museum personnel, parents, and students. These individuals assisted the Department of Education in developing and reviewing draft documents. Opportunities for citizens to make comments with respect to the standards documents were provided through public hearings that were held at five sites across the state.

A major objective of Virginia's educational agenda is to give the citizens of the commonwealth a program of public education that is among the best in the nation and that meets the needs of all young people in the commonwealth. These Standards of Learning continue the process for achieving that objective.

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# **Theatre Arts Standards of Learning**

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# Theatre Arts Standards of Learning

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## Introduction

The Theatre Arts Standards of Learning identify the content and skills required as essential components of the theatre arts curriculum through the middle school and core high school courses. The standards are designed to be cumulative and progress in complexity by course from the middle school through the secondary level.

Throughout a student's theatre arts education, specific content strands or topics are included. These strands are performance and production, cultural context and theatre history, judgment and criticism, and aesthetics. It is through the acquisition of these concepts, content, and skills that the goals for the theatre arts can be realized. A comprehensive theatre arts program provides students with the ability to understand their own responses and the responses of others to the many forms of theatrical experience.

The standards are not intended to encompass the entire curriculum for a grade level or course nor to prescribe how the content should be taught. Teachers are encouraged to go beyond these standards and to select instructional strategies and assessment methods appropriate for their students.

## Goals

The content of the Theatre Arts Standards of Learning is intended to support the following goals that will enable students to:

- Think and act creatively by solving problems individually or collaboratively by employing originality, flexibility, and imagination;
- Develop the acting skills necessary for creative dramatic performance;
- Demonstrate knowledge of the elements of theatre production;
- Demonstrate an understanding of theatre arts in relation to history and culture;
- Develop critical skills to evaluate their work and the work of others;
- Demonstrate an awareness of and responsibility for the safe and ethical use of materials, methods, and technologies;
- Make connections between theatre arts and other fields of knowledge; and
- Demonstrate the ability to apply aesthetic criteria for making artistic choices.

## Performance and Production

Students will apply concepts and skills that are inherent to theatrical performances. They will recognize problems related to all aspects of theatrical presentation. They will design and implement solutions that are consistent with form and expressive intent. Through study and practical experiences, students will develop the physical, conceptual, and intellectual skills associated with the crafts essential to theatre.

## **Cultural Context and Theatre History**

Students will demonstrate their knowledge of the ways in which cultures and theatre have related throughout history and are interacting today. They will demonstrate an understanding of the ways that other disciplines and their related technologies influence theatre and are correspondingly influenced by theatre. It is essential that students demonstrate the ability to approach the manifold creative tasks associated with theatre to attain group objectives.

## **Judgment and Criticism**

Criticism in the theatre arts is based upon a thorough understanding of the art and craft of theatre. Students are expected to thoughtfully examine, make judgments, and derive meaning from the theatre arts. Students will apply processes that involve observing, listening, reflecting, analyzing, interpreting, and making judgments. These skills are required for creating and producing as well as for judging or evaluating a finished product.

## **Aesthetics**

The ability to make qualitative judgments in theatre arts depends upon a student's ability to perceive, to experience an emotional response, and to relate that response to the actual qualities of the theatrical experience that generated it. Participation in a range of artistic experiences enables students to develop an understanding of different cultural philosophies and factors that may alter responses. Such understandings are critical to the development of a personal philosophy of theatre arts and aesthetic sensitivity that focuses on the nature, meaning, and value of the arts.

## **Grades 6-12 Safety**

*In implementing the Theatre Arts Standards of Learning, students must know how to follow safety guidelines; practice theatre etiquette; demonstrate appropriate safety techniques; and use and care for equipment, stage properties, costumes, and facilities safely while working individually and in groups.*

Safety must be given the highest priority in implementing the theatre arts instructional program in grades six through twelve. Correct and safe techniques, as well as wise selection of resources, materials, and theatre experiences appropriate to students' age levels, must be carefully considered with regard to the safety precautions for every instructional activity. Safe theatre facilities both classroom-based and auditorium-based require thorough planning, careful management, and constant monitoring of student activities. Class enrollments and audience size should not exceed the designed capacity of the room.

The theatre arts embrace a wide range of activities that are necessary to mounting a performance including:

- rehearsal of cast;
- design and implementation of scenery, lighting, costumes, properties, and sound;
- performances with audiences; and
- strike and clean-up of production materials upon completion of performance run.



Each of these activities requires knowledgeable teachers who are prepared to teach the safe use of tools and facilities. The standards listed below are among those that should be followed to avoid potential safety problems:

1. Rehearsal
  - Stage combat should be choreographed to eliminate unnecessary risk.
  - Dance rehearsals should be conducted on a smooth and resilient, but not slippery floor (e.g., sprung wood floors, marley floor).
  - Platforms and stair units should be secured from accidental movement and have sufficient railings.
  - Since rehearsals are often scheduled after regular school hours, a telephone with a direct outside line and emergency numbers posted nearby should be conveniently located in the theatre.
2. Design and implement technical elements safely
  - The construction and finishing of theatre scenery, costumes, and properties should be conducted under the same conditions and practices used in industrial arts classrooms, including appropriate personal safety equipment such as gloves, goggles, hearing protectors, and dust masks.
  - Stage curtains and drapes should have a flameproof rating and current certification.
  - Stage lighting circuits, dimmers, and fixtures should be properly maintained and regularly inspected (especially for ground continuity).
  - There should be a master switch for the electric supply for stage lighting equipment.
  - Amplified sound volumes must not exceed safe levels which can result in hearing damage.
  - All damaged and worn out equipment should be immediately removed from service.
3. Performance
  - Proper procedures for evacuation of the theatre should be discussed and rehearsed with cast and ushers.
  - Exits must be clear and unobstructed at all times.
  - All exit and emergency lights must be in good operating condition.
  - Fire extinguishers must be well-maintained and available at all times. Appropriate school personnel should be trained in their use.
4. Strike and clean-up
  - Avoid scheduling the strike and clean-up immediately after the final performance.
  - The most dangerous time of a production is the strike and clean-up, therefore it is strongly advised to begin the strike after a night's sleep to reduce accidents caused by fatigue and carelessness.



# Middle School Exploratory Dramatics

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The standards for Middle School Exploratory Dramatics are designed to provide students with an introduction to the study of theatre history, literature, and production. Through research, planning, scripting, production, and performance experiences, students acquire skills in communicating ideas, critical thinking, and collaborative problem solving. This course prepares students for further theatrical study and nurtures an appreciation for the many forms of theatre.

## **Performance and Production**

- M.1 The student will communicate ideas using individual performances, group productions, or group projects to demonstrate teamwork, cooperation, and dependability.
- M.2 The student will solve problems kinesthetically through theatre games and improvisations.
- M.3 The student will demonstrate acting skills by
  - 1. vocal production—projection and articulation;
  - 2. movement and gestures; and
  - 3. memorization.
- M.4 The student will work collaboratively and safely to select, create, and utilize the technical elements of lighting, scenery, costuming, makeup, properties, and sound.

## **Cultural Context and Theatre History**

- M.5 The student will investigate a variety of societal roles, occupations, and relationships through dramatic activities.
- M.6 The student will demonstrate how theatre is similar to and different from other literary genres through storytelling, scene presentation, improvisation, or pantomime.
- M.7 The student will demonstrate an awareness of historical and multicultural concepts through dramatic activities.
- M.8 The student will identify drama as a major form of literature.
- M.9 The student will identify and describe theatrical resources in the community, including professional and community theatres, experts, and sources of scripts and materials.

## **Judgment and Criticism**

- M.10 The student will give constructive and objective criticism of class performances using appropriate theatre arts vocabulary.
- M.11 The student will demonstrate the ability to incorporate constructive criticism in subsequent work.

M.12 The student will read and analyze scripts and respond in oral, written, or visual form.

M.13 The student will view, analyze, and interpret live theatre using oral or written responses regarding directing, design, acting, and artistic presentation.

### **Aesthetics**

M.14 The student will recognize and respond to the unique qualities of theatre through

1. interaction with the audience;
2. immediacy of live performance;
3. representation of life; and
4. incorporation of the arts.

M.15 The student will respond to ways in which theatrical works evoke sensory and emotional responses.

# Theatre I: Introduction to Theatre

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The standards for Theatre I: Introduction to Theatre are designed to provide students with a survey of the theatre arts, allowing students opportunities to experience and appreciate dramatic literature and participate in the creative processes of performance and production. The course emphasizes skill development and provides theatrical opportunities that enable students to determine personal areas of interest.

## **Performance and Production**

- TI.1 The student will recognize that theatre is an ensemble art while developing communication strategies and problem-solving capabilities through group interaction and artistic collaboration to
1. communicate and defend artistic choices;
  2. offer and select alternatives to solve problems and to build consensus; and
  3. participate in group collaborations.
- TI.2 The student will create and strengthen trust and expand listening skills through participation in theatre games and improvisations (e.g., solo and group characterizations, characters in conflict, experiments in rhythm and imagery, playwriting experiments).
- TI.3 The student will apply the creative process to the skills of storytelling, acting, and playwriting by
1. using an acting vocabulary that includes blocking and character development terminology;
  2. employing voice, body, and imagination in character development;
  3. analyzing and describing the physical, emotional, and social dimension of characters;
  4. creating and writing a monologue and/or scene; and
  5. memorizing and presenting a monologue and/or scene from a published work.
- TI.4 The student will understand and apply principles of technical theatre by
1. defining types of stages and the terms used to delineate stage areas;
  2. demonstrating knowledge of the technical components of theatre—set, properties, lighting, sound, costume, and makeup;
  3. identifying the responsibilities of technical personnel, including designers, builders, and operators;
  4. demonstrating theatre safety practices; and
  5. practicing ethical use of available technology and resources.
- TI.5 The student will explore and discuss principles of theatre management, administration, and the production process by
1. identifying the functions of business management, including fund-raising, publicity, and house management;
  2. identifying the duties of the director and stage manager in the production process;
  3. explaining the role of the playwright; and
  4. practicing ethical use of literary material.

## **Cultural Context and Theatre History**

- TI.6 The student will demonstrate how theatre is similar to and different from other literary genres and art forms.

- TI.7 The student will make connections between theatre and other curricular areas.
- TI.8 The student will reflect on life in historical times, places, and cultures by
1. researching and applying cultural and historical information to artistic choices;
  2. examining non-Western traditions in drama; and
  3. demonstrating knowledge of theatrical institutions and opportunities available in the community and the commonwealth.

### **Judgment and Criticism**

- TI.9 The student will give and integrate constructive criticism by
1. developing and using appropriate theatre arts vocabulary;
  2. discussing performances, projects, and plans; and
  3. applying the concepts of evaluation, including intent, structure, effectiveness, and value to oral and written observations.
- TI.10 The student will read, analyze, and respond to selected dramatic literature to
1. identify the elements of dramatic literature, including conflict, plot, theme, character, and dialogue; and
  2. develop criteria to describe and evaluate dramatic literature.
- TI.11 The student will view and analyze live performances and make informed responses by
1. identifying the elements of production—directing, design, and acting;
  2. describing, analyzing, and evaluating artistic choices in dramatic presentation; and
  3. exhibiting considerate audience behavior at theatrical performances.

### **Aesthetics**

- TI.12 The student will describe how theatrical activity can entertain, instruct, and interpret human experience.
- TI.13 The student will describe the elements of a theatrical experience that evoke a personal aesthetic response and describe the response using appropriate theatre arts vocabulary.

# Theatre II: Dramatic Literature and Theatre History

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The standards for Theatre Arts II: Dramatic Literature and Theatre History integrate and build upon concepts and skills from Theatre I. Through various modes of expression and performance, students investigate dramatic literature, theatrical styles, and historical periods. Students will study and respond to a variety of theatre experiences that will refine their communicative, collaborative, analytical, interpretive, and problem-solving skills. Students will expand their artistic abilities and appreciation of the theatrical arts.

## **Performance and Production**

- TII.1 The student will maintain stage properties, costumes, equipment, and facilities according to established classroom standards.
- TII.2 The student will collaborate with others to create theatre projects and productions.
- TII.3 The student will demonstrate acting skills and techniques, including vocal control, stage movement, script analysis, and rehearsal techniques representing selected styles by
  - 1. demonstrating gestures, blocking, pacing, and stage business;
  - 2. making vocal and physical choices that represent characterization, conflict, and production style;
  - 3. performing a fully rehearsed and memorized role;
  - 4. incorporating suggestions from the director;
  - 5. continuing to refine research skills for characterization and script/text interpretation;
  - 6. using preparation and awareness activities to improve concentration, observation, imagination, and sensory memory;
  - 7. researching and presenting solo and group performances; and
  - 8. incorporating psychological, historical, and social dynamics derived from information suggested by the script.
- TII.4 The student will create and strengthen trust through participation in theatre games and improvisations that
  - 1. demonstrate characterization and justify motivations;
  - 2. develop a narrative that expresses dramatic conflict;
  - 3. develop dialog and listening skills to express character relationships; and
  - 4. incorporate personal experiences into improvisation and play writing exercises.
- TII.5 The student will apply principles of directing by
  - 1. selecting plays and participating in script analysis, casting, rehearsal, and staging;
  - 2. utilizing principles of blocking;
  - 3. communicating directorial choices, including pacing, mood, concept, and style;
  - 4. employing ethical choices in script selection, editing, and presentation; and
  - 5. evaluating choices of directorial process.

- TII.6 The student will explore and demonstrate skills and principles of technical theatre by
1. consistently applying basic safety procedures;
  2. demonstrating the components, functions, and operations of technical theatre elements, including lighting, scenery, costuming, makeup, properties, and sound;
  3. making a model of a three-dimensional form from design drawings;
  4. making a two-dimensional study of a three-dimensional object using scale drawings, perspective drawings, blueprints, or computer renderings to design scenery, costumes, and properties;
  5. offering simple or complex solutions to technical theatre problems;
  6. interpreting, preparing, and presenting elements of technical theatre to enhance a scene; and
  7. evaluating technical choices in formal and informal presentations.
- TII.7 The student will explore principles of theatre management/administration and the production process by
1. applying the components, functions, and relationships of theatre management, including box office, publicity/marketing, house, tickets, and concessions;
  2. developing a schedule and organizational plan for selected areas of theatre operation; and
  3. applying the principles and practices of stage management.
- TII.8 The student will demonstrate skill in communicating concepts and information through the study of theatre arts by
1. generating a variety of theatre experiences using various resources, media materials, and available technology; and
  2. researching current theatrical institutions and opportunities available in the community, commonwealth, and world.

## **Cultural Context and Theatre History**

- TII.9 The student will identify major stylistic movements and connections to historical periods, including classical, Renaissance, Elizabethan, modern, and contemporary by
1. describing and comparing universal characters, situations, themes, and ideas in theatre;
  2. identifying, researching, and analyzing symbolism, cultural, and historical clues in dramatic texts; and
  3. researching and describing historical production designs, techniques, and performances from various cultures.
- TII.10 The student will trace the development of technical theatre by
1. explaining the effects of technological advances on theatre; and
  2. analyzing a variety of dramatic texts with reference to historical and cultural contexts to determine their production requirements.
- TII.11 The student will describe how theatre is similar to and different from other art forms, other fields of knowledge, and literary genres by
1. describing characteristics and comparing the presentation of characters, environments, and actions in theatre and other art forms;
  2. comparing the interpretive and expressive natures of various art forms in specific cultural or historical periods; and
  3. making connections between theatre and other fields of knowledge.



## **Judgment and Criticism**

- TII.12 The student will give and receive constructive criticism by
1. discussing and critiquing performances, projects, plans, or ideas objectively;
  2. evaluating personal artistic choices and artistic choices of others in informal and formal productions;
  3. analyzing and evaluating critical comments about dramatic works; and
  4. attending and critiquing theatrical productions outside of the school environment.
- TII.13 The student will read, analyze, and respond to selected dramatic literature by
1. using an expanded theatre arts vocabulary and terminology;
  2. identifying elements in dramatic literature, including structure, style, form, mood, language, spectacle, symbolism, genre, and setting;
  3. demonstrating visual, oral, aural, kinesthetic, and written responses to dramatic literature; and
  4. applying dramatic themes to personal experiences or current events.
- TII.14 The student will analyze how theatre is similar to and different from other literary genres and art forms by
1. comparing theatre to film, video, novels, short stories, poetry, music, dance, and the visual arts;
  2. viewing various art forms and comparing how common themes are expressed; and
  3. discussing ways in which the visual arts, music, dance, and/or other art forms can enhance theatrical presentations.

## **Aesthetics**

- TII.15 The student will describe personal responses to theatrical productions in terms of the qualities of the production as a whole.
- TII.16 The student will respond to dramatic literature in terms of aesthetic philosophies, including classical, modern, and non-Western.



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